



Charter Township of  
**Comstock**

# *Guide to Development*

*January 2023*

*Approval  
Authorities*

*Application  
Process*

*Review  
Procedure*

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# KEY CONTACT INFORMATION

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## Township Superintendent’s Office

Scott Hess, Superintendent (269) 381-2360 [superintendent@comstockmi.gov](mailto:superintendent@comstockmi.gov)

## Township Supervisor’s Office

Randy Thompson, Supervisor (269) 381-2360 [supervisor@comstockmi.gov](mailto:supervisor@comstockmi.gov)

## Planning & Zoning, Downtown Development Authority

Jodi Stefforia, Community Development Director (269) 381-2360 [jstefforia@comstockmi.gov](mailto:jstefforia@comstockmi.gov)

## Water & Sewer / Treasury

Bret Padgett, Township Treasurer (269) 381-2360 [bpadgett@comstockmi.gov](mailto:bpadgett@comstockmi.gov)

## Kalamazoo Area Building Authority

Mike Alwine, Building Official (269) 216-9511 [malwine@kaba-mi.org](mailto:malwine@kaba-mi.org)

## Fire Department

Mike Kessler, Fire Marshal (269) 345-9244 [mkessler@comstockmi.gov](mailto:mkessler@comstockmi.gov)

## Assessing

Kevin Harris, Assessor (269) 381-2360 [assessor@comstockmi.gov](mailto:assessor@comstockmi.gov)

## Clerk

Nicole Beauchamp, Township Clerk (269) 381-2360 [clerk@comstockmi.gov](mailto:clerk@comstockmi.gov)

# BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

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<b>Township Board</b>	
Meets the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday	Staff Liaison: Scott Hess (269) 381-2360
<b>Planning Commission</b>	
Meets 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	Staff Liaison: Jodi Stefforia (269 ) 381-2360
<b>Downtown Development Authority</b>	
Meets 4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	Staff Liaison: Jodi Stefforia (269) 381-2360
<b>Zoning Board of Appeals</b>	
Meets 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	Staff Liaison: Jodi Stefforia (269) 381-2360
<b>Kalamazoo Area Building Authority Board of Directors</b>	
Meets 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday	Staff Liaison: Mike Alwine (269) 216-9511
<b>Board of Review</b>	
Meets in March, July and December. For more information, see Township <a href="#">webpage</a> .	Staff Liaison: Kevin Harris (269) 381-2360

# APPROVING AUTHORITY TABLE

It is important that resident and developers understand the role of the various boards and commissions as to who approves or denies submitted applications. While the application and approval process will be discussed with the Community Development Director at the Conceptual Review meeting, the table below provides a general view of what board/commission will be reviewing an application.

	Zoning Administrator/Community Development Director	Planning Commission	Zoning Board of Appeals	Township Board	KABA
Zoning Compliance Permit	X				
Administrative Site Plan Review	X				
Site Plan Review	X Recommendation	X Approval			
Special Exception Use	X Recommendation	X Approval			
Rezoning		X Recommendation		X Approval	
Planned Unit Development	X Recommendation	X Approval			
Variance			X		
Appeal/Interpretation			X		
Building, Electrical, and other construction permits					X

# PLANNING & ZONING

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## Zoning Ordinance

The Zoning Ordinance regulates the usage of properties and buildings while determining the parameters for new construction or installation in Comstock Township. Regulations can apply Township-wide or be specific to a zoning district. Please consult with the Community Development Director if you have questions about the Zoning Ordinance.

The Zoning Ordinance is easily searched by using the search tool available in the upper right corner of the webpage. Find the ordinance [here](#).

## Zoning Map

The Zoning Map depicts the different zoning districts within Comstock Township. Please consult the Zoning Map to determine your property's zoning and the ordinance for the uses allowed and specific regulations. Click here for the [Zoning Map](#).

## Master Plan

The Comstock Charter Township Vision 2025 Master Plan serves as an extension of the community's vision and goals for planning and future land use in the Township. The Master Plan is updated at least every 5 years to ensure that it reflects current priorities and trends.

Applications for larger projects such as a planned unit development, rezoning and special land use require compliance with the [Master Plan](#) unless circumstances warrant otherwise. It is highly encouraged for developers to review the plan to ensure the proposed project aligns with the community's vision for Comstock Township.

## Fee Schedule

The [fee schedule](#) located on the Community Development Department [page](#), provides the cost for the various applications that are submitted for planning and zoning approval.

## Planning & Zoning Application

The [Planning & Zoning Application](#) may be used for all the applications by selecting the appropriate box(es) to identify the type of approval being sought.

### **Conceptual Review Meetings**

While not required, a successful project planning process often begins with a pre-application [conceptual review meeting](#). Conceptual meetings offer an opportunity to communicate clear expectations for application submissions, informing the developer or key representative specific regulations to be met during the various steps of the approval process. Transparent expectations allow for predictability and the saving of valuable time and money for the developer in creating an application package that is complete. This also creates an opportunity to explore larger-scale matters like infrastructure needs, qualifications for tax abatements and other incentives that may be available. The Community Development Director will include the Township Superintendent, Fire Marshal and the Building Official and Township Engineer as may be appropriate for the project. If water and sewer connection fees are applicable to the project, the Township Treasurer may be invited to the meeting. To the extent permitted by the Freedom of Information Act, these conversations will be kept confidential until the owner is ready to submit a formal application.

### **Notification Procedures**

When an application requires notification in compliance with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (P.A. 110 of 2006, as amended), Comstock Township will publish notifications in the Kalamazoo Gazette and mail a notification to the subject property and to all owners and occupants of properties within 300 feet of the boundary of the subject property at least 15 days prior to the meeting where the application will be considered. Notices will describe the nature of the request or application, identify the subject property, state where and how the application/request will be considered, and will indicate how written responses are being collected for the hearing.

For more information on how public input is gathered in the planning and development review process, please view the Township's [Public Participation Plan](#).

### **Special Meeting Procedures**

A special meeting of the Planning Commission and/or Zoning Board of Appeals may be requested outside the respective board's regular meeting schedule. The calling of a special meeting is coordinated with the Community Development Director upon payment of the [fee](#) and submission of all appropriate documents for the type of request to be considered as described throughout this guide. Public notice requirements and member availability dictate if a special meeting may be called.

### **Quick Links to relevant ordinances for development:**

- [Schedule of building regulations](#) (setback, height, etc.).
- [Parking & Loading.](#)
- [Landscaping.](#)
- [Lighting.](#)
- [Signs.](#)

# REZONING

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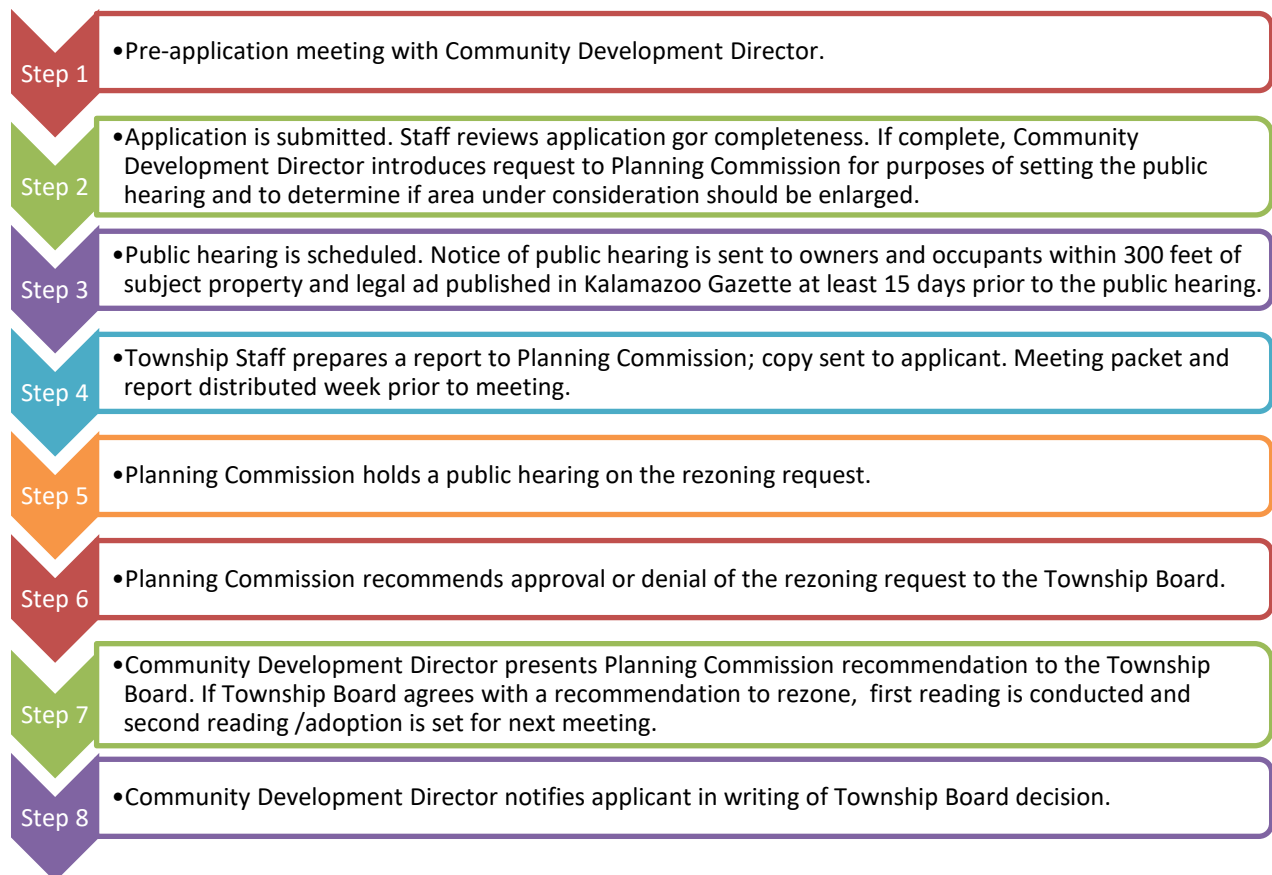
## Who can initiate a rezoning?

An amendment to the Zoning Map – a rezoning – can be initiated by the property owner or an applicant(s) with permission of the property owner, the Planning Commission or the Township Board.

## What is needed to initiate a rezoning?

Applications for rezoning must include the [Planning & Zoning Application](#) with all informational items completed, appropriate attachments, and the fee as identified in the fee schedule.

## What are the steps in the rezoning process?





# CONDITIONAL REZONING

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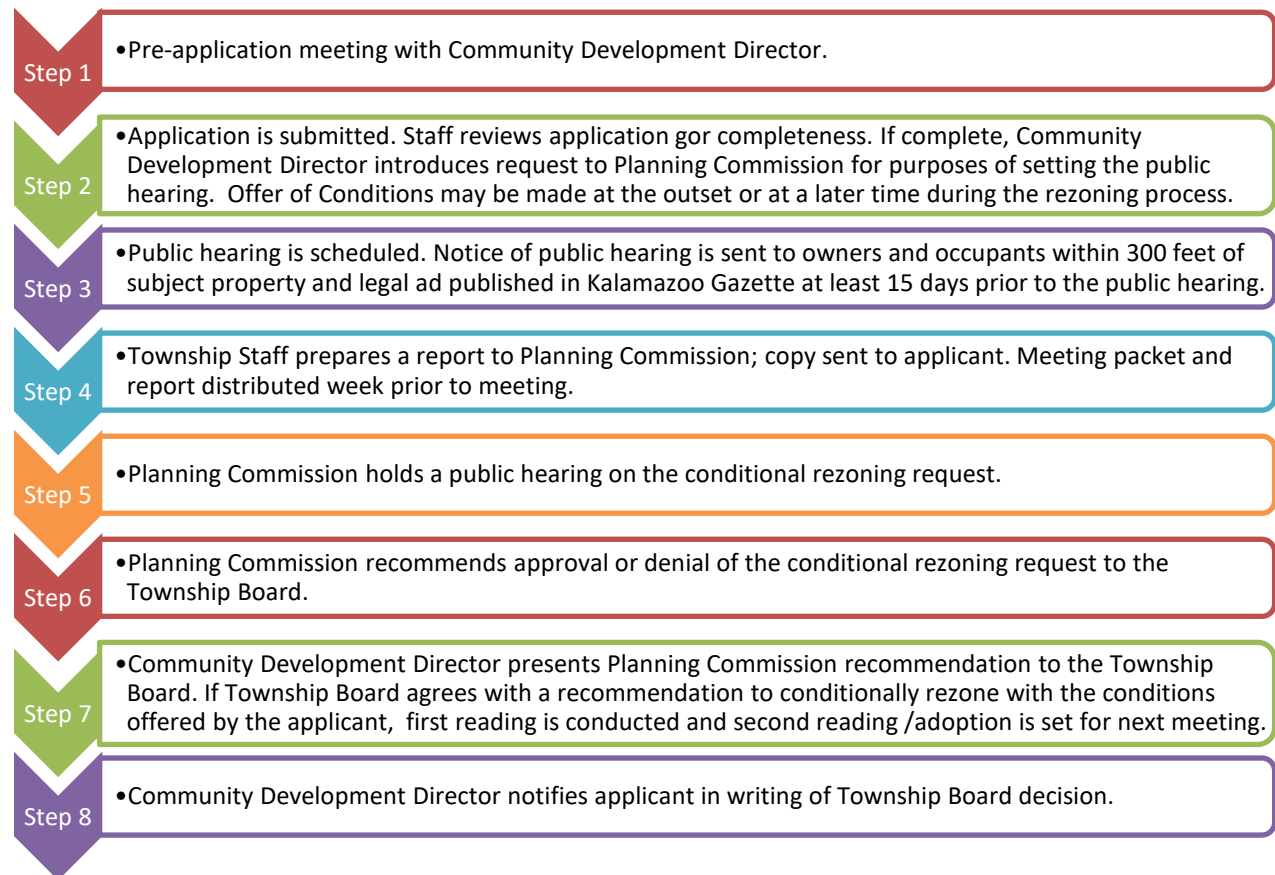
## What is a conditional rezoning?

A conditional rezoning is essentially a ‘contract to rezone’ where an applicant requests a different zoning district – a rezoning – for a particular purpose – condition(s). So long as the conditions are met, the rezoning of the land remains. If the conditions are not met, the zoning reverts to the prior zoning district. A conditional rezoning can be initiated by the property owner or an applicant(s) with permission of the property owner. The Township cannot request conditions of an applicant or require an applicant to file for a conditional rezoning request.

## What is needed to initiate a conditional rezoning?

Applications for conditional rezoning must include the [Planning & Zoning Application](#) with all informational items completed, appropriate attachments including an Offer of Conditions, and the fee as identified in the fee schedule for a rezoning request.

## What are the steps in the rezoning process?



# ZONING COMPLIANCE PERMITS

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## **Zoning Compliance Permit for Change in Use of Property.**

A [Zoning Compliance Permit – Change in Use of Property](#) is required for the commencement of a new use of an existing building or upon an improved property as outlined in Section [27.02](#) of the Zoning Ordinance. This permit serves as confirmation that the building, site and/or land use proposed is in compliance with the ordinances. A fee is due as outlined in the [fee schedule](#).

## **Zoning Compliance Permit for an Accessory Building of 200 square feet or less in area.**

A [Zoning Compliance Permit – Accessory Buildings](#) is required for any accessory building not exceeding 200 square feet in area as described in Section [27.02](#) of the Zoning Ordinance. Note that buildings larger than 200 square feet are exempt from this permit as a [Building Permit](#) is necessary in those instances, per the Michigan Building Code. A fee is due as outlined in the [fee schedule](#).

## **Zoning Compliance Permit for Wireless Communication Facilities.**

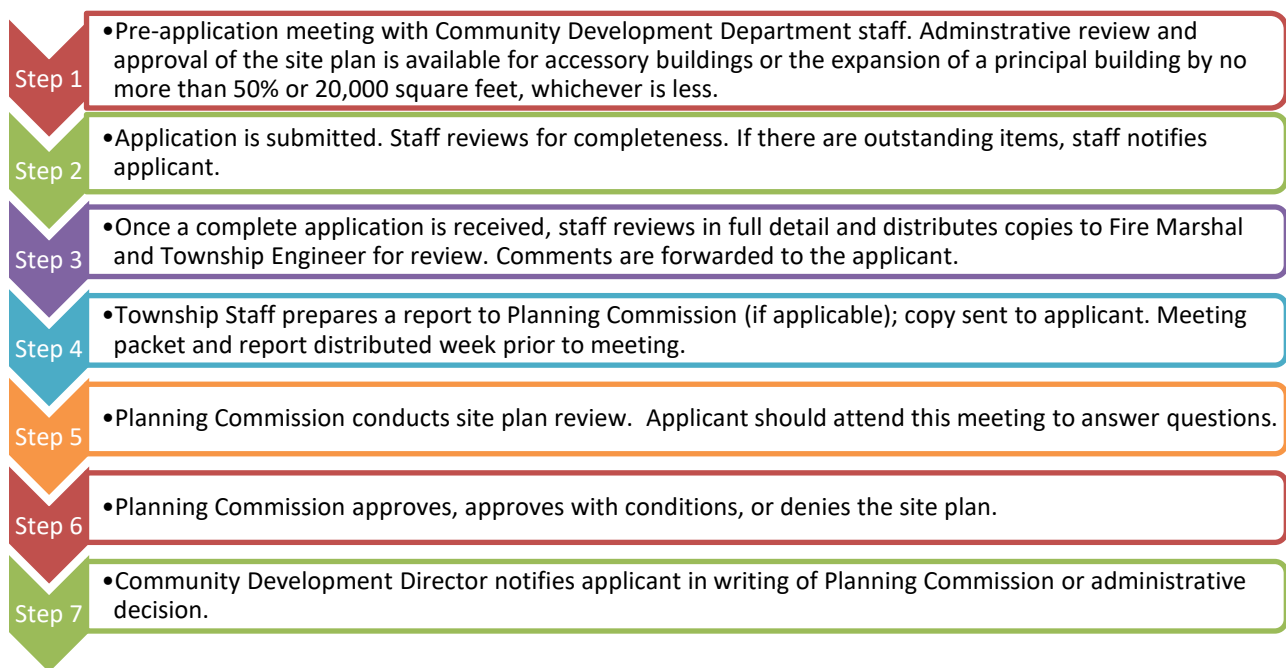
A [Zoning Compliance Permit – Wireless Communication Facilities](#) is required for the addition to or modification of equipment on a wireless communication facility/tower as outlined in Sections [4.19](#) and [27.02](#) of the Zoning Ordinance. A fee is due as outlined in the [fee schedule](#).

# SITE PLAN REVIEW

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## The role of site plans in the development process.

Site plans are essential to the development process to ensure harmonious relationships between buildings, uses and site improvements with the Zoning Ordinance. Following [application](#) for site plan approval, all development proposals must undergo site plan review and approval by the Community Development Director (administrative site plan review) or the Planning Commission (all other site plans). Informational requirements for site plan review are found on this [checklist](#).



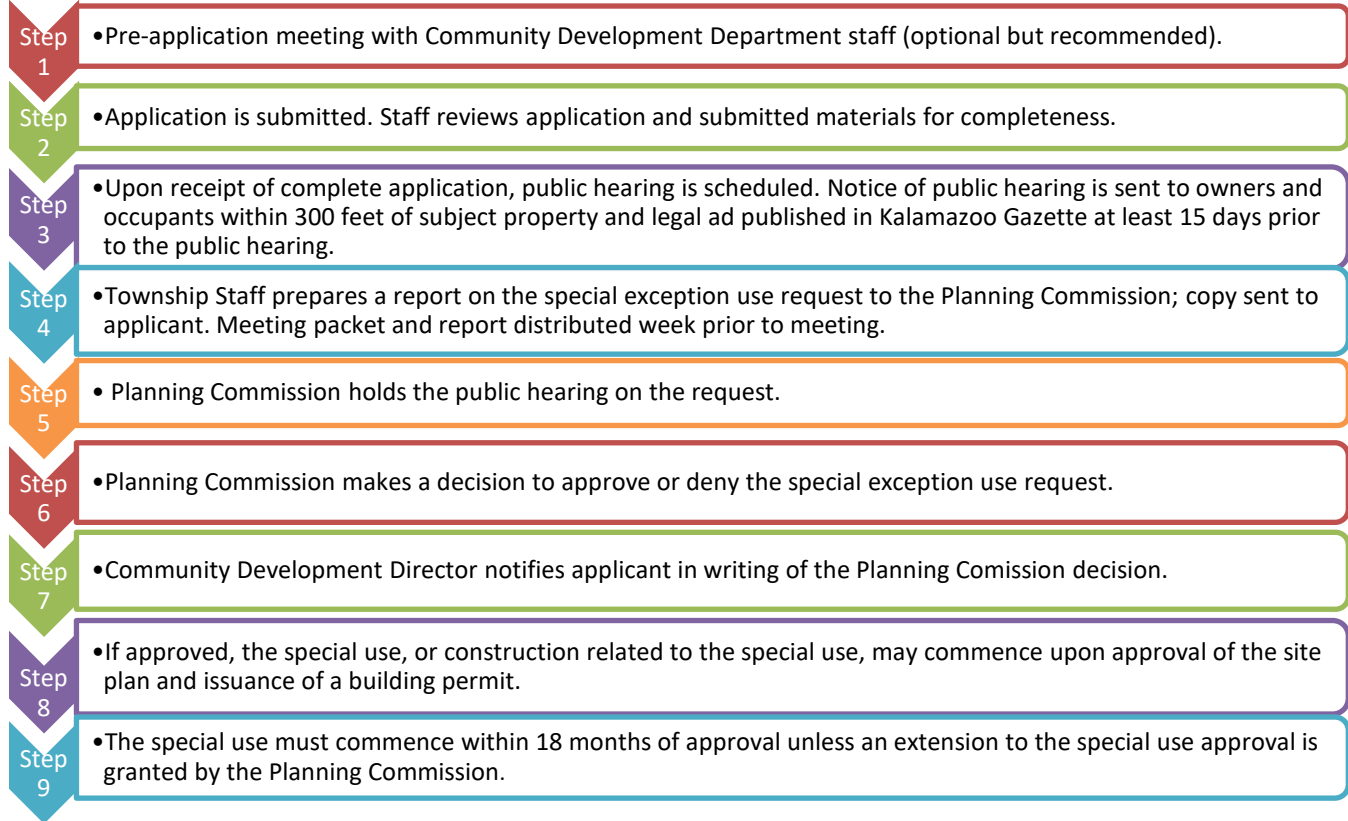
### Notes:

- Planning Commission meetings occur on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month.
- The site plan approval is good for 18 months within which time period a building permit must be secured and construction commenced.
- The process typically takes 30-60 days; less time if administrative site plan review is conducted.
- *The steps and timelines listed above are intended to provide general guidance to applicants. Meeting schedules and the timeliness of application submittals may impact the project timeline.*

# SPECIAL EXCEPTION USE

## What is a special exception use?

Special exception uses are those land uses in a zoning district that may have elements or features that make them unsuitable for every location with the district. These elements may include increased traffic, odor, noise or other nuisance impacts.



**Notes:**

- Planning Commission meetings occur on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month.
- Application fee is \$600. The Planning & Zoning Application form is available [here](#):
- See [Section 4.13.c.2](#) of the Comstock Township Zoning Ordinance for review criteria considered by Planning Commission.
- *The steps and timelines listed above are intended as general guidance. Public noticing, meeting schedules and the timeliness of application submittals may impact the timeline.*

# PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENTS

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## **What generally is a planned unit development (PUD)?**

The planned unit development is a tool available for developers that allows for flexibility and variety in the regulation of land development, fosters efficient and innovative land use, ownership, and variety of design and site layout. While PUDs allow for more flexible regulations, they also seek to preserve natural features not otherwise prioritized and to protect green space while providing amenities, public services, and utilities.

## **What is a planned unit residential development (PURD)?**

For a planned unit residential development (PURD), the intent is to promote variety in housing, both in cost and lifestyle. By allowing the dwelling type, density and open space to vary, yet maintaining those general policies and objectives of the Vision 2025 Master Plan, the PURD concept allows desirable environmental features to become part of the overall housing development.

## **What is a planned unit mixed development (PUMD)?**

For Planned Multi-Use Development (PMUD), the intent is to promote a mixture of uses incorporating office, commercial and industrial uses where appropriate based upon underlying zoning and compatibility with surrounding land use.

## **What is the approval process for a planned unit development?**

Planned Unit Developments follow both the special exception use and the site plan review processes. These reviews occur contemporaneously.

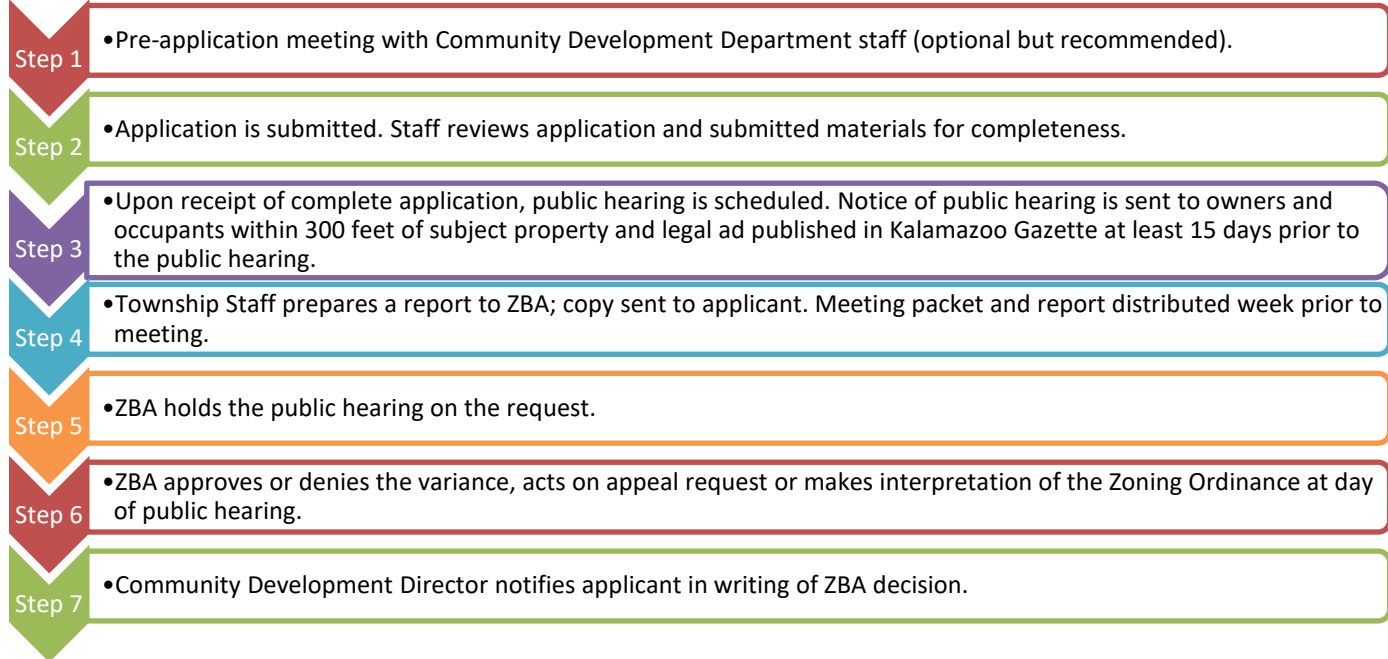
## **Where can I find more information about establishing a planned unit development?**

A fuller description of the PUD concept, the performance objectives, permitted densities and the steps for approval can be found [here](#).

# VARIANCES, APPEALS & INTERPRETATIONS

## What is a variance?

A variance is permission or approval of specific features and measurements on a property that are not aligned with the standards set in the Zoning Ordinance. The steps involved are described below.



## Notes:

- ZBA can consider non-use variances, appeals from the decision of a Township Official and requests for an interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance.
- Application fee is outlined in the [fee schedule](#). The Planning & Zoning Application is available [here](#).
- To appeal a decision by the ZBA, an applicant may file suit with Kalamazoo County Circuit Court pursuant to the provisions of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act.
- *The steps and timelines listed above are for general guidance. Public noticing, meeting schedules, and the timeliness of application submittals may impact the timeline.*

## Variance Standards:

Per the State of Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, requested variances must demonstrate a practical difficulty, which is defined as:

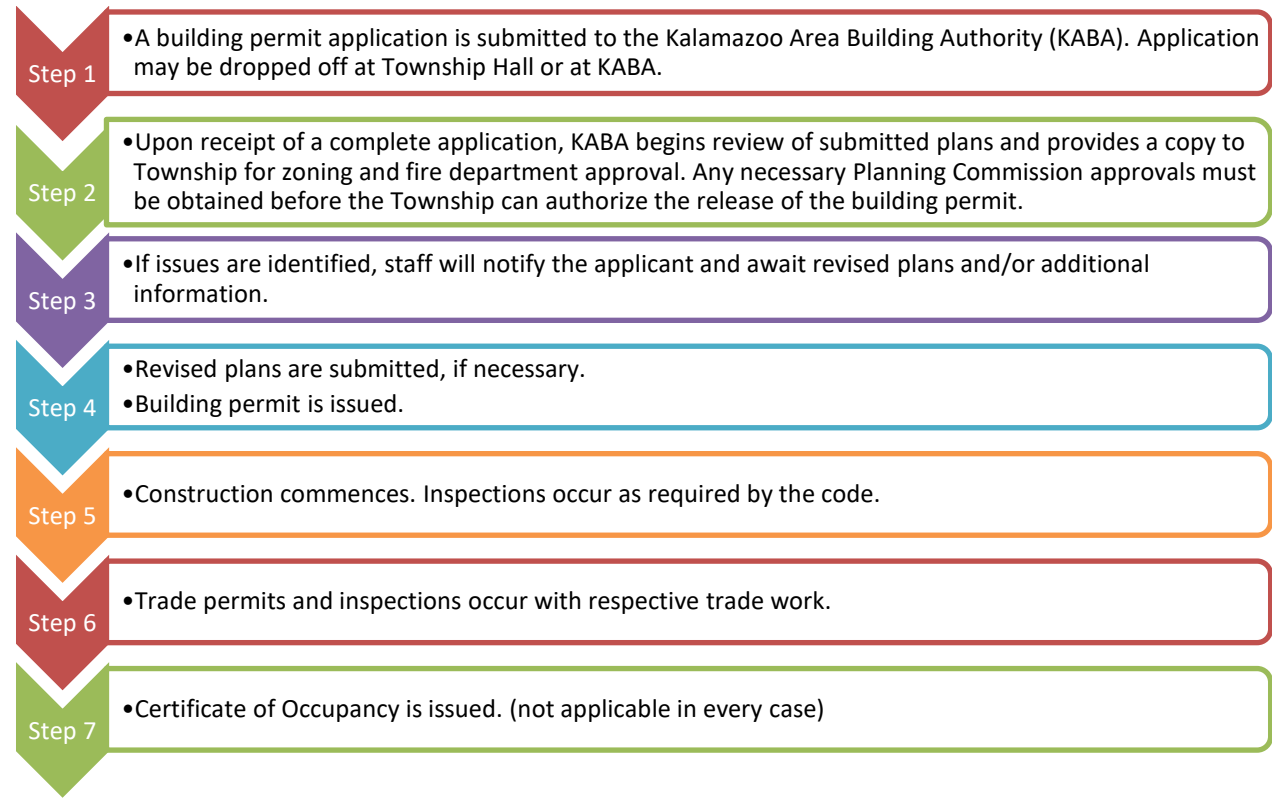
- Unique circumstances applying to the property.
- Conformance unnecessarily burdensome.
- No adverse effect upon adjacent properties.
- Need for the variance was not self-created.
- The variance requested is the minimum necessary.

# BUILDING PERMITS

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## Who approves construction permits such as building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing?

All permitting and inspections regarding construction are approved and scheduled by the [Kalamazoo Area Building Authority \(KABA\)](#).



# FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

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As a Township, the incentives that may be offered are more limited than those available from a city. However, the Township offers the below incentives and is willing to be a partner with other agencies and/or a developer in pursuing funding from the State of Michigan in the form of loans and grants or similar opportunities.

## **Industrial Development District.**

To encourage greater industrial development and spur manufacturing opportunities for developers, business owners and residents, Comstock Township offers tax incentives for industrial development. The incentives can be applied to the expansion of existing facilities, renovation of aging facilities and construction of new facilities, per P.A. 196 of 1974, the Plant Rehabilitation and Industrial Development Districts Act. The Industrial Facilities Exemption certificate can provide property tax abatement for a maximum of 12 years. For more information on the Industrial Development District, please contact the Township Clerk at [clerk@comstockmi.gov](mailto:clerk@comstockmi.gov).

## **Brownfield Tax Increment Financing.**

Brownfield Tax Increment financing, through P.A. 381 of 1996, allows developers to receive reimbursement for environmental and non-environmental redevelopment activities. Brownfields are properties and/or sites that are contaminated, blighted, functionally obsolete or hold historic value. Reimbursement for costs associated with redeveloping a brownfield occurs through the collection of incremental state and local taxes as the taxable value of the property increases through the revitalization process. To benefit from brownfield tax increment financing, developers will need to work with the Kalamazoo County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to produce a workplan for review by appropriate agencies.

Although not the lead agency for brownfield sites in Comstock, the Township is ready and willing to partner with and assist a developer in pursuing the appropriate county and state approvals, grants, loans and to establish a Brownfield Tax Increment Financing plan to return a site to active use.

To learn more about the Brownfield Program, initial evaluations, and workplan development, please contact the Kalamazoo County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority at (269) 384-8112 or visit the authority's [web page](#).



# PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

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## **Downtown Development Authority.**

The Comstock Center Downtown Development Authority exists to work to halt property value deterioration, increase property tax valuation and promote economic growth in the Comstock Center area.

The Comstock Center Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was established by the Comstock Charter Township Board in March 2019. The DDA is technically the Comstock Charter Township DDA however for branding and logo purposes, refers to itself as the Comstock Center DDA. The Downtown Development Plan and Tax Increment Financing Plan were adopted as a single planning document in May 2019.

The Community Development Director, Jodi Stefforia, serves as the Executive Director the DDA. She may be reached at [jstefforia@comstockmi.gov](mailto:jstefforia@comstockmi.gov) or (269) 381-2360.

## **Southwest Michigan First.**

Southwest Michigan First serves as the lead economic development agency for the region. The Township partners with [Southwest Michigan First](#) (SWMF) regularly to secure necessary approvals to retain existing businesses, attract new ones and position the Township to move quickly to accommodate new industrial development.